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Grant's Lieutenants: From Chattanooga to Appomattox

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Review

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Woodworth, Steven E., ed. *Grant's Lieutenants: From Chattanooga to Appomattox*. University Press of Kansas, \$34.95 hardcover ISBN 9780700615896

Analyzing Grant's Command Structure

Ulysses S. Grant ranks as the greatest general to emerge from the United States Army during the Civil War, the man whose strategic vision and tenacious, no-nonsense leadership style ensured the death of the Confederacy. While Grant may have been indispensable to the triumph of Union arms, he did not manage that effort single-handed. He had to depend on a large number of subordinates in every phase of the war to assist him in imposing his will on the enemy. Inspired by Douglas Southall Freeman's classic, *Lee's Lieutenants*, Steven E. Woodworth, a prolific Civil War scholar who teaches at Texas Christian University, decided that the best way to gauge Grant's generalship was by examining his interactions with key subordinates. Woodworth accordingly mustered a strong team of historians to put together two essay collections addressing this multi-faceted subject. The first, *Grant's Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg*, appeared in 2001. It dealt with Grant's command relationships during the first two years of the conflict. The second, which is under review here, covers officers who figured prominently in Grant's strategy and campaigns during the final half of the war.

Many of the subjects chosen for this second volume will come as no surprise. William T. Sherman, George H. Thomas, George G. Meade, and Philip H. Sheridan served Grant well in various theaters as the commanders of important field armies. Franz Sigel, Benjamin F. Butler, and David Hunter also exercised army command, but their lackluster performance forced Grant to relieve them. Edward O.C. Ord exhibited erratic conduct in several assignments, but both Sherman and Grant inexplicably protected him. Grant eventually used Ord to replace Butler as commander of the Army of the James. The book

concludes with a look at Henry W. Halleck, Grant's predecessor as general-in-chief who remained in Washington, D.C., to serve his successor as an able chief-of-staff. Grant was Halleck's lieutenant for most of the war, and he regarded the older man with a respect so deep it bordered on awe. He eventually learned, however, that Halleck had secretly disparaged his abilities in the first half of the conflict, which affected the way Grant depicted "Old Brains" in his celebrated memoirs.

Although *Grants' Lieutenants: From Chattanooga to Appomattox* completes the work that Woodworth and his colleagues began so well seven years earlier, it lacks the sparkle and thematic coherence that distinguished that earlier volume. John F. Marszalek's essay on Sherman explains how the unbreakable trust that bound his subject with Grant enabled those two officers to perform at their highest capacity. Woodworth takes a partisan approach in his sketch of George Thomas, the Virginia Unionist who did not get along with Grant. While professing that "the Union cause profited much from having George H. Thomas on its side," Woodworth rarely misses a chance to make invidious comparisons between that officer and Grant (45). Mark Grimsley's chapter on Benjamin Butler and Earl J. Hess' look at Franz Sigel fail to rise above the level of dry recitations of fact. Steven E. Nash provides a tired, traditional take on "Little Phil" Sheridan that ignores the revisionist critiques offered in recent years by Gordon C. Rhea and Eric J. Wittenberg.

Grimsley returns to his usual high standard with a perceptive examination of the complicated Grant-Halleck relationship. Ethan Rafuse also excels at probing the reactions of the proud and prickly George Meade, who had his control over the Army of the Potomac, the North's largest field army, drastically curtailed by Grant's presence during the last year of the war in the Eastern Theater. William B. Feis shines while exposing the quirks and foibles of the overrated E.O.C. Ord. Finally, Benjamin F. Cooling transcends the Grant worship that enraptures too many of his fellow contributors in an imaginative and original essay that profiles the first three Union officers tasked with countering Confederate Lieutenant General Jubal A. Early's 1864 raid on Washington, D.C. Cooling faults Grant for lethargic and detached leadership during a crisis whose magnitude he consistently underestimated. By relying on subordinates managed by Halleck, Grant came close to allowing the Confederates to penetrate the defenses of the Union capital. If not for Lew Wallace's delaying action at Monocacy, Maryland, Early might have scrawled an indelible black mark on Grant's record.

Despite the uneven quality of this collection's contents, *Grants' Lieutenants: From Chattanooga to Appomattox* provides a valuable contribution to the literature on Grant, the Union high command, and how the North won the Civil War.

Gregory J. W. Urwin is a professor of history and associate director of the Center for the Study of Force and Diplomacy at Temple University. He is also the editor of Black Flag over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War, which is available in paperback from Southern Illinois University Press.